

I CLAIM:

1. A movable unit for placing one or more utilities in an excavated trench, comprising:

a hopper for receiving select material provided from a source;

a conveyor that receives select material from said hopper and dispenses the material from an outlet on the bottom of the excavated trench as the unit moves to form a bedding;

a guide for placing a length of at least one utility on said bedding as the unit moves; and

an outlet on said hopper from which material is dispensed onto the bedding to encase the a least one utility on the bedding.

2. A unit as claimed in claim 1 further comprising:

vertically adjustable means at said conveyor outlet to set the height of the bedding relative to the bottom of the trench.

3. A unit as claimed in claim 2 wherein said vertically adjustable means for setting the height of the bedding comprises a blade or plate which contacts the top surface of the bedding and also smoothes the bedding by surface

4. A unit as claimed in claim 1 further comprising:

adjustable means at said hopper outlet to set the height of the encasement relative to the top of the bedding.

5. A unit as claimed in claim 4 wherein said adjustable means for setting the height of the encasement comprises a blade which also smoothes the top surface of the encasement.

6. A unit as claimed in claim 1 and further comprising:
a framework encompassing said conveyor outlet and said hopper outlet, said framework including spaced and opposing side walls that support the walls of the trench and to also prevent any undesirable materials from falling into the trench.

7. A unit as claimed in claim 6 wherein each of said side walls has an opening at the bottom thereof to permit material for the bedding to flow outwardly of said side walls.

8. A unit as claimed in claim 7 wherein each of said side walls has an opening at the bottom to permit material flowing from said hopper outlet for the encasement to flow outwardly of said side walls.

9. A unit as claimed in claim 1 wherein said conveyor is a screw type conveyor.

10. A unit as claimed in claim 1 wherein said conveyor has an inlet at said hopper above said conveyor outlet to receive the material from said hopper to be used to form the bedding.

11. A unit as claimed in claim 1 and further comprising:
a chute located at the front of the conveyor outlet for directing the material for forming the bedding laid below the length of the at least one utility.

12. A unit as claimed in claim 1 and further comprising:
a chamber at said hopper outlet to receive the material and to permit the material to fall by gravity onto and around the at least one utility that has been placed on the bedding.

13. A unit as claimed in claim 12 wherein said means for setting the height of the encasement comprises an adjustable gate at the rear end of said chamber that strikes off the material dispensed from said chamber to a predetermined depth above the installed said at least one utility.

14. A unit as claimed in claim 12 and further comprising a support frame located forward of said chamber relative to the direction of movement of the unit, and a reel or tracer cable mounted on said frame to be used for locating the at least one utility.

15. A unit as claimed in claim 12 and further comprising a warning ribbon dispenser to be placed above the encasement in the trench prior to final backfilling of the trench.

16. A unit as claimed in claim 1 and further comprising an electrically controlled tether connected to the unit to adjust the angular position of the unit with relation to the bottom of the trench.